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ABSTRACT

The Therapeutic Preschool Program serves 3- and 4-year-old children of average intelligence who are diagnosed as having emotional and/or behavioral problems. The primary goal of the program is to provide a framework for teaching the social, emotional, and cognitive skills necessary for eventually mainstreaming the children into a regular education program. A structured program is offered, incorporating a variety of therapeutic modalities such as behavior modification, individual and group therapy, and developmental play therapy. The program is staffed by a mental health therapist, an exceptional student education teacher, and an instructional aide. This curriculum guide describes the theoretical and research basis for the program, program goals and objectives, learning characteristics of children aged 3-5, the affective curriculum, a plan to prevent behavior problems, sample daily home note, active learning and the use of learning centers, use of community resources and field trips, and parent involvement. A list of approximately 60 suggested readings is appended. (JDD)

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Attachment Based

THERAPEUTIC PRESCHOOL CURRICULUM

PROGRAM FOR EMOTIONALLY HANDICAPPED AND SEVERELY EMOTIONALLY DISTURBED STUDENTS

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DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION FOR EXCEPTIONAL STUDENTS

THE SCHOOL BOARD OF PINELLAS COUNTY, FLORIDA

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Paper presented at the Annual Convention
of the Council for Exceptional Children
67th, San Francisco, CA, April 3-7, 1989

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The Florida Diagnostic and Learning Resources System is part of a state and federally funded network providing support services to exceptional student programs. There are eighteen associate centers throughout Florida. The Gulfcoast Center serves Hernando, Pasco and Pinellas Counties in the areas of learning resources, child find, and diagnostic services.

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Stephen Meckel, a preschool teacher in the Program for Emotionally Handicapped Students, met with Barbara Finck, an early childhood expert, and preschool teachers to develop curricular areas important to a preschool program for emotionally handicapped children. The teachers determined that the curriculum should emphasize active learning and focus on affective and behavioral activities that assisted children in changing behavior. The teachers developed program components and piloted the activities in the preschool classrooms. After-school meetings, staff development days, and workshops were used for teachers and others to meet. The curriculum development was an ongoing process of implementation and revisions. The curriculum development team consisted of the following teachers:

Stephen Meckel
Sharon Meckel
Betsy VanTilburg

The teachers' time, effort, flexibility, cooperation and sheer dedication resulted in a curriculum framework which greatly benefits young children and their families in Pinellas County.

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OVERVIEW

The Therapeutic Preschool Program is a combined effort of community Mental Health Programs and the School Board of Pinellas County, Florida, with partial funding from the Juvenile Welfare Board of Pinellas County. Each program is staffed with one full-time Mental Health therapist, a full-time Exceptional Student Education teacher and a full-time instructional aide. The program follows the school calendar, and the children participate in the program approximately six and one-half (6-1/2) hours per day, five (5) days per week. Transportation is provided by the school system according to geographic residence. There is no charge for the program by Mental Health or the School Board.

The preschool program serves children three (3) to four (4) years of age of average intelligence (or potential thereof) who are diagnosed to have emotional and/or behavioral problems. The primary goal of the program is to eventually mainstream the children into a regular education program such as kindergarten, nursery school, or first grade. Therefore, a good potential for change must be indicated. Parental participation is a vital part of the program, and parents agree to be actively involved and participate in services available through the Mental Health Agency.

Children are referred from numerous sources, including parents, pediatricians and nursery schools. All referrals to the program go through Child Find. Child Find is a part of the public school system which attempts to find unserved or underserved children who are in need of special services.

The child participates in a structured program which incorporates a variety of therapeutic modalities including behavior modification, individual and group therapy, and aspects of developmental play therapy.

The therapeutic preschool children participate in music, art, and physical education classes, which are scheduled on a regular basis. Children who qualify for speech and language therapy are seen by the speech therapist each week.

When a child reaches school age and is ready to be integrated with other students, he/she is mainstreamed into one of the regular kindergarten classes. Initially, the child goes to the kindergarten class gradually during a preferred activity. Time spent in the kindergarten class is increased as the child meets success.

The length of time that a child may participate in the preschool program is dependent upon the child's age at the time of acceptance and his/her need for continuation. A five (5) year old may complete the kindergarten year in the program, even though his/her sixth (6th) birthday is reached during the year. This allows for more time for mainstreaming and follow-up for those students who need additional support.

Recommendations for future placements are made when the child leaves the program in order to assist the parents. This may include dismissal from the program into a regular class, transition into a resource program with supportive assistance, or transfer into another exceptional program.

THEORY - RESEARCH

To understand the importance of the teacher-student relationships in interventions with pre-kindergarten students experiencing behavior problems, a theoretical framework is helpful. Two central issues are: (a) the development of an internal model of social relationships and the use of such a model in establishing future relationships; and (b) the concept of a safe, secure base from which a child can fully explore a learning environment. Two central premises on which the therapeutic interventions are based follow:

1. Early infant-parent attachment relationships give rise to expectations and behavior patterns which become a model for future teacher-student relationships.

2. The intentional development of the experience of a secure trusting teacher/student relationship is the first step to meaningful therapeutic intervention.

It is widely acknowledged that social relationships play a major part in children's development (Hartup & Zick, 1986). Hartup (1985) delineated three functions fulfilled by relationships in individual socioemotional and cognitive development:

> First, they are the contexts in which basic competencies emerge. These include (but are not limited to) language, impulse regulation, the self-system, a repertoire for coordinating one's actions with those of others, and knowledge about the world - including knowledge about relationships themselves.
>
> Second, relationships are resources. These entities constitute both emotional and cognitive resources that furnish the individual with the security skills that it takes to strike out into new territory, meet new people, and tackle new problems (p. 66).

Hartup (1985) stated a third contention that "relationships are forerunners or precursors of other relationships" (p. 66). Early child-adult attachments form a model of how a child perceives himself and others. "That is, one learns how to be in relationships by being in relationships. This would apply on the behavioral level as well as the more global attitudinal level" according to Sroufe and Fleeson (1986, p. 68). Hence, if a child's past experiences with adults have been positive, positive reactions to his behavior are expected. Conversely, if adults have been experienced by a child as hostile and/or punishing, this is what the child will anticipate in relationships with adults.

Sroufe (1983) summarized the current theory on the importance of relationship in development:

1. Individuals are biologically disposed to form intimate (attachment) relationships, and development takes place in the context of these relationships.
2. The earliest relationship(s) are of special significance because they provide the context for the emergence of the self and because they represent prototypes for later relationships.

3. Early prototypes are carried forward through attitudes and expectations the child forms concerning the availability and likely responses of others and the outcome of his/her own efforts to cope with stress.
4. A prototype behavioral organization will be manifest in different, though coherent forms, in different circumstances and at different points in development (p. 55).

The work of J. Bowlby (1969, 1977, 1980, 1982) and M.D.S. Ainsworth, M. Blehar, E. Waters, and S. Wall (1978) provides an in-depth explanation of attachment theory and supporting research.

Relationships and Socioemotional-Cognitive Development

The theory and research described above suggests that forming attachment relationships between teacher and child impacts both socioemotional and cognitive functioning. A secure parent-infant attachment provides a base for children to explore and learn more freely from the physical and social environment (Ainsworth, et al., 1978; Main, 1973; Matas et al., 1978).

Children categorized as securely attached score significantly higher on various tests of problem-solving abilities than do children categorized as anxiously attached (Ainsworth, et al., 1978). Attili (1984) reported that when first entering a strange preschool environment, children initially interacted mostly with the teacher. Attili (1985) stated "It seems likely that a relationship formed with the adult (and the adult contributes to its formation) provides a child with a secure basis from which he/she can come to terms with the preschool environment" (p. 61).

In a review of the literature on the connection between cognitive development and social relationships, Hartup (1985) proposed the hypothesis that "relationships account for both normative change in certain cognitive functions and the generation of individual differences in certain cognitive skills [(p. 75), Hartup's emphasis]. Pedersen, Faucher, and Eaton (1978) reported the impact on children of an "outstanding teacher." They found that the teacher had a major influence on children's academic performance, initiative, and willingness to work in the classroom setting.

Piaget (1981) viewed socioemotional development and cognitive development as inseparable. He stated, "affectivity would play the role of an energy source on which the functioning, but not the structure of intelligence would depend. It would be like gasoline, which activates the motor of an automobile but does not modify its structure" (p. 5). He concludes that emotion is the primary motivator of cognition. In short, how an individual feels will, to a large extent, determine what that person pays attention to and remembers. One can infer that children who have dysfunctional attachment histories have difficulty establishing a healthy teacher-student relationship which provides a secure base. They are in effect "running on empty" when faced with a stressful social or academic situation in the classroom.

DESCRIPTION OF CHILDREN SERVED

The Therapeutic Preschool Program serves three, four, and five year old children who have been identified as Emotionally Handicapped because of persistent and consistent behaviors exhibited at home and/or in a preschool environment. Short attention span, distractibility, low frustration tolerance, hyperactivity, aggression toward self, others and/or property, inappropriate peer interaction, defiance, and withdrawal are characteristics that describe the maladaptive behaviors of many of these children.

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The Therapeutic Preschool Curriculum has evolved out of an essential need to distinquish the learning patterns of very young children (3 to 5 year olds) from those of school aged children (6 years and up). The purpose of this curriculum is to provide a framework for teaching the social, emotional and cognitive skills necessary for the child's integration into eventual full-time placement in the general education setting.

PHILOSOPHY

An effective curriculum for all young children focuses on the development of socioemotional, physical and cognitive potential. Young children learn through play. Play provides the optimum framework for concrete/sensory experiences needed to facilitate the child's full development. Through play children manipulate, explore, compare, sort, group, construct, and communicate and learn how the physical world works.

Humans are sensory beings that think, and emotions are sensations with a cognitive component. Research points out that our emotional experience has direct impact on how healthfully our physical and cognitive processes occur. (Examples are test anxiety, stress related disease such as ulcers, chronic back pain, etc.)

In working with children adults have the potential to develop an optimal awareness of how each child functions under stress (including the learning process). In the classroom a child is put under a certain amount of healthy stress while teachers and therapists work to reinforce the child as he/she reattempts a task. This develops and expands the child's problem-solving skill base. How much that process is facilitated depends on the ability to truly see the child. Seeing does not mean sympathizing with a child or being a passive observer (after all, we really don't know how a child feels - we can only guess). Teachers/therapists must separate their emotional process from what a child is experiencing. Discovering what blocks a child cognitively and affectively in a given situation as an inseparable cognective experience is the ultimate key to changing the child's behavior and his/her emotional state of being.

Facilitating a child's emotional process (how a person defines and organizes himself) also facilitates his/her own growth. This occurs whether it is recognized or not. It is impossible for adults to avoid brushing up against the roots of their own personal blocks as they work with children. As children are guided in learning about themselves teachers/therapists also learn about themselves.

To facilitate the development of the emotional process adults need to:

A. Get to know themselves - how they work, what they are afraid of, threatened by, and enjoy. Then adults can separate their own emotions from the child's and focus on a child and clearly see him.

B. Enhance the child's emotional process through daily experience-based groups rather then the academic approach to affective education. This carries over to crisis interventions. Instead of forcing emotional conformity through rigid token systems and academic "affective" lessons, expose a child to his present experience of himself in relationship to others by creating that atmosphere through experience-based exchanges.

C. See behaviors as symptoms - not causes - of a child's problems.

D. Guide a child through his pain and allow him to feel it rather than halting it. By doing this a child can learn the process with the adult(s) and take those skills with him.

E. Realize that every child needs a safe base. If he is always anxious or angry he has no safe base and knows very little else but anxiety and anger. When teacher/therapists begin to introduce a child to his quieter parts it will be very new and therefore hard for the child at first (i.e., all children are very quiet and one child screams out and breaks the silence). Each child's transition behavior should be seen as needed paths rather than disorders to be immediately silenced for the sake of "control."

Focusing on the messages in a child's behavior helps adults avoid keying into a child's conflict. Adults are less apt to be reactive from this perspective, because there is no bad behavior - only messages to be received. Instead of something feared ("I must not be a good teacher/therapist or he would not be acting out"), the behavior becomes a cue or clue as to how the child is organized emotionally. An element of mystery is added to working with behavior. Teachers/therapists become detectives in the very literal sense as the puzzle of healthy human interaction is pieced together.

LEARNING CHARACTERISTICS OF 3, 4, AND 5 YEAR OLDS

WHAT THEY CAN DO?

At Three Years of Age

Three year olds are more confident, more skillful, and more satisfied with themselves than twos. Gross muscular coordination is more controlled.

Therefore, they need:
Challenging climbing and balancing equipment - closely supervised.
Space and opportunities for running, jumping, galloping, walking, tricycle riding, wagons, music and rhythms to encourage body movements.

Threes are refining their manipulative skills, their hand-eye coordination.

Therefore, they need:
Puzzles, blocks, form boards, gadget boards, large peg boards, large beads to string, lacing, buttoning, zipping, snapping.

Threes are eager to explore their environment through sensory experiences.

Therefore, they need:
Opportunities to listen to sounds, music, conversations.
Opportunities to touch, to feel (objects in a "Feely Box") - "What does it feel like?", sand, dough, clay, finger paint, water play.
Opportunities to look - visual discrimination, simple matching, sorting by size and shape, learning colors, easel painting, crayon, simple cooking, to explore tasting, smelling, feeling, etc.
"Listening" walks, "looking" walks, "smelling" walks, etc.

Threes imitate and pretend. They still enjoy some solitary, or parallel play but are beginning to enjoy playing with one or two other children. They are beginning to share.

Therefore, they need:
Housekeeping toys and equipment to stimulate dramatic play.
Dress-up clothes.
Short "sharing time" in small groups.
Finger plays, rhythms, puppets that encourage both creativity and imitation.
Unit blocks and transportation toys.

Threes are developing communication skills, rapidly increasing vocabulary, improving enunciation, establishing speech patterns.
Note: Dr. Burton White says, "By the age of 3, children should have acquired the ability to understand most of the language they will use in ordinary conversation throughout their lives."

Therefore, they need:
Individual and small group stories, small group sharing or "Circle time," small group projects, block corner, housekeeping corner, sandbox, mural painting, etc., object lotto games, picture games encouraging naming objects. Short games to develop listening, following simple directions. Music and rhythms to experiment with sounds.

Threes have short attention spans, are easily distracted by other children and activities. It is hard to wait for turns. It is easy to forget rules.

Therefore, they need:

A variety and balance of active and quiet toys and materials.

Frequent reminders "Remember! Keep the sand in the box."

Simple, uncomplicated activities that can be completed quickly, adapted to their own tempos - block building, easel and finger painting, clay dough, crayons, simple puzzles, transportation toys, farm animals, dolls, etc.

Simple clothing to manage, easy fastenings.

Short stories, in books or flannel board, about everyday experiences - told or read individually or in small groups, with opportunities to participate, interact.

Encouragement from adults to finish simple tasks, "I'll help you pick up the blocks."

Threes need limits but resist routines. They are "dawdlers" - a hold-over from two year old negativism.

Therefore, they need:

Warnings or preparations for transitions - "one more turn on the slide and then we go indoors."

Scheduling to avoid fatigue.

Recognition for conformity rather than attention for dawdling. They like to please adults.

Threes are ambivalent - sometimes independent, sometimes dependent and babyish. They mostly want to "do it myself" - dressing, eating, building, climbing.

Therefore, they need:

Time to experiment. Opportunities to fail and try again.

Protection from ridicule, from lack of caution.

Encouragement when tired or frustrated. Praise for success.

Tolerance for their mistakes. Acceptance for their feelings.

THREES ENJOY LEARNING!

<u>At Four Years of Age</u> - Ego Centered Children, "The Frustrating Fours"

Interested in working out his/her own ideas in his/her own way, but finds it fun to play with other fours. Plays best in an immediate group which is small.

Frequently uses speech as a favorite means of communication - to express needs, to socialize; uses "silly" talk, and rowdy, elementary sense of humor. Asks "Why" frequently - sometimes in genuine inquiry, sometimes as a social trap to hold an adult's attention.

Keen on dramatic play - lives out roles of family members and familiar community workers.

Sometimes dogmatic in giving directions; may resort to physical force in putting across ideas; may cry when thwarted; all this a means to learning about social interplay, to increasing his respect for others.

Alert, active, eager, curious, but still needs to move at his own pace. Delights in gross motor activity - tries out ingenious stunts on the playground. Fairly independent in routines (bathroom, dressing, eating), but still dawdles, talks, forgets to "hurry."

Wants to explore environment. Manipulates materials. Experiments with sound, color combinations, rhythmic movements. Uses art materials crudely, but occasionally some representation apparent in paintings and drawings; beginning form evident in carpentry work; balance and intricate accomplishment evident in block building.

Eager for social activities such as learning about pets, collecting nature materials, taking walks. Relatively short attention span. Usually prefers sampling a number of activities to delving deeply into one. Interested in factual material. Likes to sing, and sometimes makes up his own songs.

Listens with absorbed interest to stories which give information about trains, boats, cars, planes, community workers, animals.

At Five Years of Age - Comfortable Children, "The Fascinating Fives"

Uneven bodily growth - long, straight, firm legs; small lungs; rapidly growing heart; large muscles much better developed than those of fingers and hands; eyeballs still growing, so child is far-sighted; hand and eye coordination not completely developed yet.

Good control of body beginning to be evident in purposeful and skillful use of it - running, skipping, dancing, climbing, jumping. Active without the four year old's restlessness. Enjoys plenty of purposeful movement. Builds skillfully and inventively with blocks, boxes, toys, ladders. Learning to throw and catch balls.

Needs balanced program with chance for active then quiet times. Fatigue shown by crossness and irritability. Should not be expected to sit still for too long; occasionally may be absorbed in some project for 20 to 40 minutes.

Likes stories related to the here and now, also imaginative or informative stories. Likes poems; doesn't like interruptions; wants to see pictures; pretends realistically to read.

Loves dramatic play. May act out stories simply and with plenty of spontaneous action. Acts out family and community situations in an involved and realistic way - plays "mother and father," "doctor," "Sunday School," "going to the store," etc.

Greatly interested in group activities and play with other children, though still very much of an individual. May tire of group activity in the middle of it and hunt some other play which appeals more. Takes turns well; respects property rights; practices more acceptable ways of getting along in problem social situations.

Talks freely; converses easily; tells stories; relates incidents with some accuracy; easily understood.

Quiet independent in routine situations, though should not be pushed too hard, and may need reminders; still needs some help with tying shoelaces or difficult buttons.

Interested in doing things the right way, because five year old is interested in conforming; can be taught to adjust to the needs of the group.

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AFFECTIVE CURRICULUM

The intentional development of a healthy teacher/child attachment relationship is a base for cognitive, socioemotional, and behavioral intervention. Children also develop through significant attachments with peers facilitated through the teacher/child attachment. Attachment is an emotional tie between individuals. From a child's early attachment experiences, a model or prototype of relationships with adults and peers emerges. The model may be healthy or unhealthy. In this context maladaptive behaviors are viewed as symptoms of disruptive and/or dysfunctional attachment histories. This results in negative models of relationships which, without intervention, children are doomed to repeat.

The function of the teacher/child relationship is to disconfirm or interrupt the child's negative model of self and others and to serve as a "safe base" from which the child can generalize to interactions with peers, parents and other teachers. The child gradually changes his/her negative model of interacting because it is no longer needed. The child's newly functioning model of interacting is more positive and results in a significant reduction of maladaptive self-defeating behavior patterns.

This new model of attachment between the teacher and child becomes a base around which the child organizes and integrates his or her cognitive and socioemotional development in the educational setting.

Equally as important as the healthy teacher/child/peer attachments is a clear separation or ending to the relationships. To complete the process, the teacher's responsibility is to help the child draw a circle around shared experiences by integrating key time and space experiences into good-byes. For all children, especially those with a dysfunctional attachment history, learning to say good-bye is a corrective experience which validates their newly functioning model of attachment.

Children learn that they will be missed and they in turn will miss others. Current research in facilitating cognitive development continues to point to the crucial importance of the teacher/child attachment relationship particularly in problem solving and critical thinking (see suggested readings).

Basic to the learning process is children's ability to trust themselves and the adults who teach them. This is totally interactional. Children must trust the people in their world, or they reject all that these people want to teach them. They learn to have faith in those who respect them and accept their feelings. This allows children to find success. In turn, they learn to trust themselves. In a climate that engenders trust, children want to learn and are able to learn. (Danoff, Breitbart, and Barr, 1977, p. 9.)

The Therapeutic Preschool Curriculum specifically focuses on social/emotional survival skills which are established through adult-child relationships. The preschool staff functions as an extension of the parenting unit. Genuine concern is communicated to the children through daily contact. Caring for exhausted, injured or ill children, supporting sad or acting out children, sharing the joy of teachable moments and meeting such everyday needs as tying shoes and rubbing backs at quiet times, are opportunities for the formation of adult-child bonds.

The Therapeutic Preschool teachers recognize the importance of specific ongoing training in emotional process skills. Adults begin to change a child's behavior by first focusing on their own reaction to the child's behavior. An adult who is unaware of his/her feelings elicited by an acting out or withdrawn child may inadvertently reinforce that behavior. Conversely, when an adult clearly differentiates between the child's behavior and the adult's internal reaction to that behavior, the adult has the opportunity to help the child find new ways to get his or her needs met.

Meaningful relationships with the preschool staff develop into meaningful relationships with other children and greatly enhance relationships with other important adults, especially parents and teachers. When a child learns to see himself as worthwhile, he begins to see others as worthwhile. It is then that he is ready to benefit from a learning environment such as kindergarten.

Affective development is facilitated during the Good Morning Circle, Sharing Circle, and Ending Circle (and individually) throughout the day on an as needed basis for prevention and management of behavioral symptoms and socioemotional cognitive integration.

AFFECTIVE CIRCLE TIME

Good Morning Circle

Goals:

1. Provide cohesive atmosphere.
2. Provide the opportunity for children to be acknowledged by staff and peers.
3. Behavior management (prevention).
4. Modeling appropriate social interaction skills.
5. Provide sensory-motor integration.
6. Cognitive and socioemotional organization.
7. Language development.

Objectives:

1. Children will experience themselves as important, smart, creative, graceful, trustworthy, ("all the above").
2. Children will experience being "in charge" of themselves.
3. Children will experience meaningful contact with staff and peers.
4. Children will experience how to quiet themselves.
5. Children will learn to focus attention.
6. Children will learn appropriate alternatives to aggressive behavior towards peers and staff.
7. Children will communicate likes and dislikes.

Rules:

1. No hurts, if a child initiates some form of physical contact it must be gentle and socially appropriate.
2. Stay in circle.
3. Children may choose whether or not to participate in any given activity. If a child chooses not to participate, he/she is encouraged to verbalize not wanting to take part.

The time frame is based on children's needs and interests.

Sharing Circle

Goals:

1. Socioemotional and cognitive organization.
2. Opportunity for acknowledgement.
3. Self-worth enhancement.
4. Language development

Objectives:

1. Children will express feelings about themselves, others, and events of the day.
2. Children will begin to develop inner core of self through defining likes and dislikes.
3. Children will share with others about experiences which are meaningful to them personally.
4. Children will learn to accurately describe objects, events and relationships in their world.
5. Children will experience acknowledgement and respect in conversations with adults.

Rules: See Good Morning Circle

Ending Circle

Goals:

1. Developing attachment-separation process skills.
2. Cognitive and socioemotional organization.
3. Language development.
4. Review of the day.

Objectives:

1. Children will begin to define who they are through their interactions with peers and adults.
2. Children will learn to give and receive acknowledgement.
3. Children will learn to verbally express their feelings about themselves, peers, and adults.
4. Children will acknowledge their daily successes.
5. Children will experience as a valuable part of the group.
6. Children will say goodbye to a child or staff member of their choice in some meaningful way.

Rules: See Good Morning Circle

BEHAVIOR PLAN

Prevention of behavior problems is a major focus of the Therapeutic Preschool classroom's daily activities. Children learn from adults who care about them and with whom they have developed meaningful attachments. (See Affective Curriculum.) Children are provided numerous opportunities to be acknowledged, they experience themselves as smart, important, lovable, competent, and trustworthy. One to one quality contact time between staff and children, social/emotional group experiences, direct concrete curriculum experiences, music and movement along with flexible scheduling are the primary tools utilized. When children feel they are important and have meaningful relationships with adults and their peers, then behavioral difficulties are significantly minimized. At the same time, new appropriate social/emotional responses compete with and eventually replace old negative behavior patterns.

Classroom rules in the Therapeutic Preschool provide the framework to teach appropriate school and home behavior. Example rules are as follows:

Have fun. Children learn that school is a fun, interesting place to be; that learning is exciting. It is also emphasized that hurting others, destroying property, refusing to participate or yelling inside, do not lead to fun.

No hurts. No kicking, biting, hitting, pinching or teasing, which of course, hurts others feelings.

Soft voice. Children are encouraged to use appropriate voice level in the classroom, halls, and cafeteria.

Follow directions - listen to your smart part. Children are encouraged to perceive themselves as smart and that they are the only ones that know how they think and feel. When a child is displaying inappropriate behavior, he or she is asked, "What does your smart part tell you to do right now?" "Is that following directions?" or "How is that helping you?" In this way children learn that they can be in charge of themselves and hence be responsible for their behavior. Also, they learn that they have choices about how they feel and behave. If a child continues to act out or refuse to participate, he or she receives one-to-one therapeutic intervention inside or outside the classroom.

The decision to provide one-to-one intervention is based on the child's needs in question and the needs of the other children. Behavioral interventions used and specific child outcomes are handwritten on the daily note. This increases parent cooperation and communication.

Physical limits. On occasion physical limits are necessary for the child to prevent him from hurting himself, others, or destroying property. Simultaneously, it provides an opportunity for the child to experience a limit while being "out of control" and enables them to regain emotional and behavioral control with nonjudgmental support from the teacher. The job of the teacher is to provide a focus around which the child organizes himself. As the child quiets it is important that the adult gives the child feedback to maximize the impact of the child's quieting experience. Reinforcing that the child quieted himself and that he is capable of recalling that skill again brings about a lessened need (and eventual extinction) for the use of

restraint. It is important to note that the opportunities for physical contact (i.e., rocking, rubbing feet, backs, tummies) need to be available daily to balance the child's need for caring contact particularly if restraint has been utilized for safety reasons.

DAILY NOTE HOME

Each day a Home Note describing behavior and interventions is sent to parents to be signed and returned (see following sample). It is emphasized that any misbehavior was handled at school. The system is based on "catching kids being good" so a child cannot help but be successful at some point during a given activity period. Parents are asked to write return notes to the teacher if they have questions or information to share.

SAMPLE DAILY HOME NOTE

OPENING EXERCISES and choice of concept readiness materials (puzzles, bead stringing, snap blocks).*	WORK ACTIVITY. Children learn how the world around them operates from daily experiences with blocks, dramatic play, manipulatives, art, sand/water play and other active learning experiences.
HELLO CIRCLE. Children have the opportunity to say hello to each other and receive acknowledgement and recognition from preschool staff and peers.	PHYSICAL EDUCATION. Provided by school-based P.E. staff.
LANGUAGE ARTS. Calendar, language experience, storytelling, etc. and conceptual readiness skill development.	NAP AND INDIVIDUAL TIME. Preschool staff spends quality, individual time with student.
SCIENCE. Children acquire basic preacademic readiness skills and knowledge through a science-based experimental curriculum.	SNACK. Children acquire readiness skills and nutritional information from their participation in preparing and serving snacks.
LUNCH. Children acquire appropriate table manners and nutritional information. SHARING CIRCLE. Discussion, likes, dislikes or morning activities. Review schedule for afternoon.	ENDING CIRCLE. Children have the opportunity to share what they liked or didn't like about the day and say goodbye to each other in anyway they choose.

*Schedule may vary according to student needs.

STAFF COMMENTS:

PARENT COMMENTS:

PLEASE SIGN AND RETURN.

_____
SIGNATURE

Our Daily Home Note is based on recognizing children for appropriate classroom behavior. We work on catching children "being good." Misbehavior is dealt with at school on the spot. Children are recognized for: 1) having fun (we really emphasize that learning can be fun); 2) using a soft voice; 3) no hurts; 4) following your smart part. Following your smart part helps children to recognize that they know what they think and what they feel. The teacher may use stars, stickers, etc. to acknowledge appropriate behavior.

ACTIVE LEARNING

The Therapeutic Preschool Program ascribes to the active learning philosophy as exemplified by Jean Piaget:

> ...in order to know objects, the subject must act upon them, and therefore transform them: he must displace, connect, combine, take apart, and reassemble them...
>
> From the most elementary sensorimotor actions (such as pushing and pulling) to the most sophisticated intellectual operations, which are interiorized actions, carried out mentally (e.g., joining together, putting in order, putting into one-to-one correspondence), knowledge is constantly linked with actions or operations, that is with TRANSFORMATIONS.
>
> ...knowledge...at its origin, neither arises from objects nor from the subject, but from the interactions - at first inextricable - between the subject and those objects.

Piaget found that young children at the pre-operational stage (from 2-7) learn through activity and that the foundation of intelligence and knowledge is action. In describing Piaget's approach, DeVries and Kohlberg stated:

> Piaget's research showed that the mind of the child is qualitatively different from that of older children and adults. This fact led him to argue that the aim of education should be not only to instruct, but to provide a formative milieu for the child's indissociable intellectual, moral, and affective development - not just to furnish the mind, but to help form its reasoning power. Piaget's research led him to conclude that the source of knowledge, intelligence and morality is in action.....Affectivity is bound up with intellectual development, where the differentiation of interests, feelings, and values and the exercise of will are an integral part of developing thought about physical and social worlds.....The essential characteristics of active methods are that they inspire children's interest, play, experimentation, and co-operation (1987, p. 41).

Piagetian theory emphasizes the role of the learner as one who constructs knowledge through activity and de-emphasizes the role of teacher as "instructor." Piaget defines the teacher as a facilitator of learning, one who must be particularly knowledgeable about the developmental needs of children and how they think.

ACTIVE LEARNING CENTERS

The basic processes of observing, measuring, classifying, predicting, communicating and moving are stressed in the child-centered, actively oriented centers. Children will not only be learning math, science, language, social studies, art and music, but they will also be engaging in experiences that continue to develop logical and systematic thinking. Logical and systematic thinking is a prerequisite to more complex learning involving symbols (numbers and letters).

MAIN SCIENCE CENTER

The science center is the major center from which all activity centers extend. Experience in science not only satisfies children's curiosity and interest but also is the best vehicle for helping children make that important transition from thinking that is perception bound, egocentric and illogical to thinking that is flexible, logical, reversible and capable of conserving. (Neuman, 1972.)

Science provides the child with opportunities to understand how the world works. Utilizing their senses, children develop the basic process of observing. Observation is the fundamental building block for all other processes and thus must be stressed in every way possible throughout all of the various activities carried out in science. From that point children will learn use of space/time relationships (daily calendar, clocks, etc.), measuring (baking, sand/H_2O table), using numbers (lining up, counting snack), classifying (living/nonliving things - respect for life), communicating (How? What? Where? When? Who?), and predicting (cause and effect). The use of these processes in early years is preliminary to undertaking more complex learning in the later grades.

EXTENSION CENTERS

The extension centers are Art Center, Sand Water Table, Dramatic Play Center, Manipulatives Center, Block Area, Playground Area, Woodworking Area, Garden Area, Quiet Center/Library Area, and Home-Living Center. Materials and equipment for these centers are provided. Learning centers integrate other traditional subject areas.

RELATIONSHIP OF BLOCK AREA TO GENERAL SUBJECT AREAS

This information provides an example of how learning centers integrate traditional subject areas and how children learn pre-requisite skills through the active learning process.

Rationale:	Block building provides children with the prerequisite skills necessary for socioemotional organization, body awareness, control, and opportunities to develop gross motor coordination.
MATHEMATICS:	Block play provides children the opportunity to directly experience quantitative concepts such as one to one counting and counting sets. Blocks are scaled in mathematical units and have basic shapes of a triangle, square, and rectangle.
LANGUAGE:	Children utilize quantitative directional, positional, and spatial words like larger-smaller, big-little, less-more, longer-shorter, between, on, over, under, like, different, etc. in block play conversation.
SCIENCE:	Block play provides children with the opportunity to explore some of the physical laws of matter by building various constructions such as roads, bridges, inclines, and a wide variety of buildings.
ART:	Children have the opportunity to create a world limited only by imagination through block play.
SOCIAL STUDIES:	Children have the opportunity to act out many social roles through block play. The houses, garages, space shuttles, and farms they construct provide many chances for dramatic role playing, which in turn helps them begin to define their own role.

MATERIALS AND EQUIPMENT

MATERIALS FOR SCIENCE: Any material that can be safely explored by a preschooler is suitable for the Science Learning Center.

Ideas:

a. Bug Cages (bugs captured on playground or buildings)
b. Fish Tank
c. Empty Tank - "Critters" (frogs, snakes, etc.) Can be brought from home or caught during the day.
d. Plants

Equipment: Magnets, magnifying glasses, large and small mirrors, microscopes, prepared slides, binoculars, aluminum foil, wax paper, pie plates, rocks, shells, leaves, rope, measuring devices, scales, large plastic tub, corks, screen wire, plate, paper bags, plastic bags, straws, prism, springs, glove, kaleidoscope, stethoscope, ant farm.

. . . . . .

MATERIALS FOR ART: Glue sticks, tempra powder and liquid, liquid starch, textured cloth samples, crayons, markers, pencils, variety of paper (construction, tissue, water color, computer), scissors, egg cartons, color paddle.

Equipment: Table, chairs, bookcase for materials.

. . . . . .

MATERIALS FOR WATER/ SAND TABLES: Plastic and rubber tubing, measuring devices, water/ sand wheels, liquid soap, beans, rice, food coloring, straws, corks, fishing weights, rakes, shovels, pails, cups, spray and squirt containers (CAREFUL!), funnels and molds.

Equipment: Sand/water table and cover.

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MATERIALS FOR DRAMATIC PLAY: Clothes, shoes, dishes, cooking utensils, hats, purses, belts, ties, coats, sheets, large pieces of different textured cloth, play food, cash register, play money, puppets, stage, dolls.

Equipment: Table and chairs, play refrigerator, stove, sink, dishes, pots and pans, silverware/utensils, iron and ironing board, telephone, cradle, high chair, stroller, shopping cart.

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CONCEPTUAL READINESS (MANIPULATIVES) MATERIALS: Puzzles - Big Knob Cheese, Animals with Knobs, Fruits and Vegetables with Knobs, Hanging Clothes, At School, Profession Series, Large Puzzle Box, Formogram, Puzzle Rack, Parquetry - Wooden Shapes & Cards, Lacing Boards, Pegboards/Pegs, Large & Small, Peg Pattern Cards, Templates, Legos, Lincoln Logs, Sorting Box, Tinker Toy, Lacing Beads & Strings, Interlocking Cubes, Lockboard, Bristle Blocks/Bears, Duplo Blocks, Construction Sets, Workbench, Cobbler's Bench, Lite-Brite, Rock-N-Stack, Nuts & Bolts, Teddy Bear Bingo, Lottos, Bingos.

Equipment: Table with chairs.

BLOCK AREA MATERIALS: Unit blocks, plastic blocks, hollow blocks, cardboard blocks and accessories, i.e., cars, people, string ropes, directional sign, balance beam, farm and zoo animals, transportation toys.

Equipment: Storage cases and large area to build in.

PLAYGROUND AREA MATERIALS/EQUIPMENT: Equipped with fence and concrete slab, bench, slide (low), climbing obstacles, tunnels, bikes, scooters, turtles, wagons, wheelbarrow, balls (10"-14"), rope - jump, bean bags, hoops, punching bags, balance beam, rocky boat/steps, swings, slides, climbing equipment.

WOODWORKING AREA MATERIALS: Scrap wood, nails, sandpaper, screws, C clamps, glue, paint, dowels, wheels, etc.

Equipment: Workbench with vice, hammer, saw, hand drill, level, miter box, plane.

COMPUTER: Computer, printer, concept readiness software.

GARDEN AREA MATERIALS: Child size garden tools, seed or small plants.

Equipment: Space to plant, water source, wheelbarrow.

QUIET CENTER/LIBRARY MATERIALS: Wide variety of age-appropriate books and tapes.

Equipment: Rug, bean bag chairs, rocking chairs, listening center.

HOMELIVING MATERIALS: Dress up clothes (from dramatic play), styrofoam beads, plastic food (children may draw from other centers for materials such as a block to represent butter, for instance).

Equipment: See dramatic play (page 27).

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EXTENDED MATERIALS LIST

MUSIC: Record Player, Tape Player/Recorder, Rhythm Band Instruments, DLM - Auditory Training Tape, Sound Match Containers, Records, Hap Palmer Series, Ella Jenkins Series, We All Live Together Series, Peter, Paul & Mommy, High Scope Music Series.

MATH: Judy Clock, Teddy Bear Counters, Sequencing Sizes, Peg-It, Countwell, Balloon Counting, Sixmaster, Collecting Animals Logically, Geometric Matching and Counting, Number Bingo, Clown Game, Post Sorting Box, Concepts and Language, Design Box, 1-inch Cubes with Pattern Cards, Sorting and Order Kit, Color Shape Abacus Set with Board, Match Mates, Nesting Cubes.

LANGUAGE ARTS: Picture Cards, Classifying, Same & Different, Opposites, Rhyming Pictures, What's Missing?, Spatial Relationship Cards, Naming Actions, Sequence Cards, 3-5 Pictures, Primary Development Box, Flannel Board Story Kits.

ERIN CURRICULUM

Early Recognition Intervention Network (ERIN)

ERIN is one of the state and county adopted preschool curricula. The Therapeutic Preschool Program adapts ERIN for use with preschool emotionally handicapped children.

ERIN is a nationally validated assessment and curriculum follow-up program for identifying at-risk or handicapped children, age 3 through 8 years and maximally stimulating their growth in mainstream or special education and home settings.

The Joint Dissemination Review Panel of the U.S. Office of Education has validated the effectiveness of the ERIN program in a variety of educational settings:

a. less severely handicapped children in MAINSTREAM N-K-1 classrooms;

b. more severely handicapped children in SPECIAL class and home-based services.

ERIN includes all aspects of the early childhood and primary curriculum, from self-help and basic concepts to readiness and academic skills; all are organized through one developmental learning framework. This framework is a theoretically sound, yet easy to understand, key to these most fundamental skills. Because it uses one foundation for assessment and for curriculum planning, the ERIN system is consistent and powerful. Suggested activities and materials aid the teacher in meeting identified needs of the children in as much detail as is necessary for each child or program. An ERIN curriculum is provided in each classroom, and the teachers are trained in all components of the curriculum.

COMMUNITY RESOURCES/FIELD TRIPS

Typically children identified as emotionally handicapped have been denied many experiences in the general community because of their behavioral symptoms. Parents are very hesitant to take "acting out" children to public places. Therefore, the children's general knowledge and experience concerning the community around them is often very limited. The children have not had the opportunity to learn acceptable behavior when out in public. The Therapeutic Preschool Program endeavors to provide a wide variety of community based experiences through field trips and classroom visitations by community members.

A word about field trips: Trips need to be especially well planned, age appropriate, and fun. Out of school experiences provide numerous opportunities to reinforce concepts and skills being learned in the classroom, to learn new information and to correct distortions and misconceptions. These experiences also have an interest boosting effect which helps promote the attitude that learning and school are fun. Children need to be involved in trip planning and to know when, where, why and how long. Rules and expectations must be clearly delineated before a trip begins and reinforced during the experience.

Going to and from is an excellent opportunity for children to ask questions concerning the world around them; to play games such as "I Spy" (colors, different modes of transportation, etc.) and to sing. Maintaining a specific focus diminishes behavioral difficulties in transition and can provide numerous spontaneous learning experiences.

A word about class visits: Careful planning of classroom visitations is also very important. Age appropriateness of subject matter, length of presentation and time of day need special consideration. Pre-planning with both children and visitor increases the quality of the experience. The visitor should know what to expect from the children as far as behavior, interest and attention span and know that the program staff is ultimately responsible for behavior management. Children need to know what to expect also, especially in situations of live animals and/or particularly when seductive items are involved.

Follow-up: Recapping a trip experience or classroom visit is an excellent opportunity to facilitate children making the connection between learning in the school setting and the outside world. Follow-up activities may include but are not limited to discussions, drawing pictures, making experience charts, creating models, making up a song, role playing, and coordinating activity centers, i.e., organizing a block center around a fire fighter theme after a trip to a local fire station.

NOTE: All field trips need either to be on the County approved field trip list or a special approval may be applied for in advance.

CLASSROOM PARENT COMPONENT

Parents interested in learning how to follow through at home with classroom interventions may be offered the opportunity to participate in a parent awareness group facilitated by the preschool teacher.

A group can be held in the evening every other week during each semester totaling twelve sessions.

The goal of the group is for parents to begin to develop an understanding of their child's behavior and learning problems and to become familiar with the therapeutic interventions utilized in the classroom by the therapeutic preschool teacher.

The parents practice relaxation exercises and through hands-on experiences parents practice specific classroom interventions utilized with their children.

FORMAT

7:00 - 7:15	One liners from parents about their present experience.
7:15 - 7:40	Relaxation exercises with selected music.
7:40 - 8:00	Sharing.
8:00 - 8:15	Parent child practicum (role playing where one adult acts as child and the other adult is the parent).
8:15 - 8:30	Reverse roles.
8:30 - 8:50	Sharing and parents say what they liked the most during the group and what they did not like.
8:50 - 9:00	Goodbyes.

Parents may also participate in the program by assisting in the classroom, going on field trips, meeting individually with the teacher, and communicating informally such as phone calls and notes to school.

MAINSTREAMING

Children in the Therapeutic Preschool Program are mainstreamed into a regular classroom during their kindergarten year. Students meet with optimum success when they exhibit the following social and classroom survival skills which are taught in the preschool classroom.

A. Social skills

1. Cooperative play, i.e., sharing toys, materials, etc.
2. Initiation of positive peer interactions.
3. Appropriate responses to social initiations of adults and peers.
4. Showing affections (by hugs, holding hands) toward peers.
5. Assisting peers with some activity.

B. Classroom survival skills

1. Student needs to be able to ask for help in regard to understanding classroom rules and assignments.
2. Student needs to display "teacher-pleasing" behaviors, e.g., smiling, thank yous.
3. Student needs to be able to function appropriately both academically and socially with minimal teacher feedback.
4. Student needs to be able to perform the above within the limits of the particular mainstreaming classroom.

C. Minimal academic competence in available curriculum may be a major factor in determining mainstreaming success.

D. Therapeutic preschool staff members provide support and suggestions to mainstreaming teachers in the regular classroom and at scheduled or impromptu meetings as time permits.

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PROGRAM GOALS

1. Children learn that they are lovable.
2. Children learn that they can experience success.
3. Children learn that they can communicate with language and develop appropriate expressions of basic feelings.
4. Children learn classroom expectations.
5. Children learn to accept responsibility for their own decisions, right or wrong.
6. Children learn to solve problems by taking risks in a learning environment.
7. Children learn that adults can be teaching, loving, supporting people that can be trusted.
8. Children develop and integrate socioemotionally and cognitively through play.
9. Children learn and develop physical skills.
10. Children learn age-appropriate independence.
11. Children learn to enjoy the process of creating and to appreciate the work of others.
12. Children learn to enjoy and anticipate the learning process.
13. Children learn the attachment/separation process.
14. Children experience unconditional acceptance.

PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

As a result of the therapeutic preschool program, children increase their ability to:

1. Identify and express feelings of anger, fear, sadness, joy, without hurting self or others or destroying property.

2. Disconfirm negative perception of self and others through positive interactions with significant adults and peers.

3. Demonstrate the ability to interact positively with peers and staff in a variety of social situations.

4. Communicate thoughts and feelings about their physical environment, space, and time through language, movement, and other expressive activities.

5. Demonstrate beginning number concepts through activity rather than rote learning.

6. Practice age-appropriate self-help skills.

7. Demonstrate developmentally appropriate fine motor skills through manipulative activities involving eye-hand-finger coordination.

8. Demonstrate developmentally appropriate gross motor skills through activities involving running, jumping, hopping, balancing, climbing and rhythms.

9. Demonstrate general knowledge of community-based resources and organizations.

EXAMPLE OF DAILY SCHEDULE

Arrival - Children choose or are assigned child-directed conceptual readiness activities.

Good Morning Circle - Children greet one another and participate in movement, affective circle games, quiet time to music and share a small snack while discussing what they liked or disliked during circle.

Opening exercise - Flag salute, discussion of date, days of the week, weather, daily schedule, class rules, brief sharing of "news."

Choice or assignment of planned science activities - water table (measuring, float/sink, etc.) and specific teacher-directed perceptual readiness activities.

Story, flannel board, puppets dramatic play.

Sharing Circle - Discussion, evaluation of mornings activities, likes and dislikes, showing creations and constructions.

Cleanup, bathroom.

Lunch.

Music, rhythms.

Work Activity - Children choose or are assigned interest centers: Blocks, Dramatic Play, Art, Science or Nature Projects, Woodworking, Sand/Water Table, and manipultives.

Outdoor activity: Some free, some directed on developmentally appropriate playground equipment.

Washup, bathroom.

Nap/Individual quality time, individual conceptual readiness.

Physical Education.

Snack - Children may help prepare, set up and serve.

Cleanup - Children assist.

Goodbye Circle - Children share daily experiences, show items they have constructed and say or sing goodbye to each other and staff.

Bus.

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